



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion on the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1293/2013 {COM(2018) 385 final}.

The Commission welcomes the Bundesrat's support for the continuation of the LIFE programme in the next Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 and for the creation of a specific 'Nature and Biodiversity' sub-programme within the 'Environment' field of the programme.

The Commission recognises that adequate financing is key for effective implementation of the Union's nature legislation and biodiversity strategy. In this context, the Commission is promoting better mainstreaming of nature and biodiversity aspects into the full range of Union policies and instruments. In particular, the LIFE programme will develop synergies with other Union's programmes, such as the InvestEU Fund, Horizon Europe, the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund+, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. These programmes, whilst having distinct goals and being different in size and nature, have inter-related activities and therefore they could help to replicate and upscale techniques, approaches and best practice previously developed under the LIFE programme. Integrated projects - in future strategic integrated projects and strategic nature projects – have also been conceived as a vehicle to improve environmental, climate and nature/biodiversity funding by better mobilising and using finance for environment, climate and biodiversity in other instruments of the European Union, as well as through more effective policy integration.

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The Commission notes the concerns expressed by the Bundesrat regarding the proposed management of the programme. The Commission believes that a more flexible, agile budget is necessary to ensure that a programme such as the LIFE programme remains fit for purpose beyond 2020. The spending review, a thorough assessment of all on-going programmes and funds undertaken to support the preparation of the package of proposals for the next Multiannual Financial Framework, has considered options to improve flexibility in programmes or funds in order better respond to unforeseen circumstances or to address new spending priorities. It also established that the actual rules governing the mobilisation of some of the instruments are too burdensome and need to be simplified.

The Commission is of the opinion that it is more suitable to introduce specific information, such as the co-financing rates for grants and thematic objectives, in future multiannual work programmes and calls for proposals rather than in the Regulation itself. This will allow the targeting of each action to its specific objectives and beneficiaries. According to the new Financial Regulation¹, the Commission adopts the multiannual work programmes in the framework of its budget implementing power. The Commission would like to reassure the Bundesrat that the inputs from Member States and other stakeholders, including from the National Contact Points, will be duly taken into account when drawing up such multiannual work programmes.

The Commission shares the Bundesrat's views on the need to improve the geographical balance in the distribution of projects across the different regions of the European Union, while quality and added value at Union level serve as the leading criteria governing the project evaluation and award process. For this reason, the Commission is working closely with the National Contact Points of the Member States to find a concrete solution. In particular, this cooperation aims to analyse the needs and understand the type of support that could be provided via the National Contact Points network to improve broader uptake.

Under the Commission's proposal, support will indeed continue to be possible for cross-border measures. The new standard action projects include the pilot, demonstrative and best practice projects under the current Regulation, where not only are cross-border measures possible, but they actually benefit from a bonus in the evaluation process. Furthermore, cross-border measures will be possible under the strategic nature projects, whose definition under the new Regulation extends their scope beyond that of the present nature integrated projects to include projects supporting any of the broader European Union nature and biodiversity objectives, including for the implementation of the Union's Green Infrastructure Strategy. In addition, the European Commission is about to publish guidelines on a strategic framework for further

¹ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012

supporting the deployment of green and blue infrastructure at Union level, which will also be relevant for the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Bundesrat and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

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First Vice-President*

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Member of the Commission*